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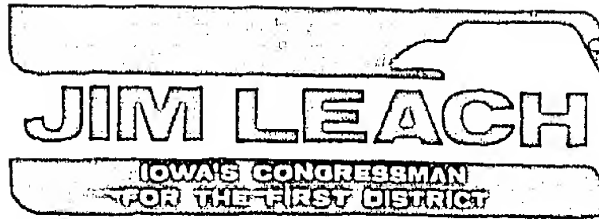
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Statement by Rep. Jim Leach (R-IA)
At the Joint Hearing
On Scowcroft Mission to China
Dec. 13, 1989

Mr. Chairman, first let me express my thanks for your extending the courtesy of allowing a minority chosen witness, Professor Barnett, to testify. As the Committee knows, Doak Barnett is one of America's leading Sinologists.

Mr. Chairman, no political party, no philosophical grouping has a monopoly on indignation. The conservative wing of the Republican Party, the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, the moderate center have reflected unanimous appall at the indefensible suppression of democratic dissent by the current government in Beijing.

What is at issue today, however, is not a question of indignation, but of judgment -- how America can play a constructive role in moderating Chinese policies and liberalizing Chinese institutions. If the history of the past several decades is a guide, almost every U.S. effort to isolate China has accentuated xenophobic nationalism on the mainland. On the other hand, almost every U.S. step toward constructive dialogue with Beijing has been met with a liberalized response.

This Congress and this Administration have no intention of kowtowing to illegitimate Chinese actions. This Congress and this Administration, however, have an obligation to the Chinese people to take whatever steps that stand the best chance of lifting their government's yoke of political oppression.

In the final measure, the high-visibility gambit of General Scowcroft and Secretary Eagleburger may be considered a test of the efficacy of outside parties helping extricate a proud nation from an embarrassing corner. President Bush is prudentially betting that an historically xenophobic China is more likely to temper its stridency at home and abroad if it isn't perceived to be capitulating to the pressure of foreign powers.

Here it must be stressed that the only political system that fits economic free enterprise is political free expression reflected in governmental institutions of, by, and for the people. Advancing freely associated economic ties with the West has only one political side effect: it builds bridges to democracy. Isolating China economically runs a far greater risk of assuring oppression than advancing democracy.

In most circumstances in international affairs it is preferable to have open covenants openly arrived at. On rare occasions, however, administrations reflect rare wisdom by refusing to articulate on their own behalf all the reasons for all the policies for which they are responsible. The very nature of today's Chinese conundrum makes restraint -- i.e., public inarticulation -- a greater virtue than self-serving rationalizations. Yet this Congress must take notice that this President is not risk-averse, that he is prepared to lead America according to a strong vision -- even if his leadership brooks certain criticism.

Alas, partisan confrontation has again surfaced in U.S. policies toward China, but lest there be doubt, it should be emphasized that

this time it is the Democratic Party that appears to prefer ideological intransigence and it is a Republican President who wants to open the door to the future.

My own view is that given the enormity of the change taking place in world politics, there has never been a more propitious time for a low-key professional to occupy the White House. In terms of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and our warming relations with Moscow, this President is sending a signal that, while the United States is the world's greatest military power and preeminent symbol of Western values, a policy of going-it-alone is fraught with danger: either becoming isolated ourselves or seeking a perilous isolation of others.

As the British historian B.H. Liddell Hart noted: "Never corner an opponent, and always assist him to save his face. Put yourself in his shoes -- so as to see things through his eyes. Avoid self-righteousness like the devil -- nothing so self-blinding."

It is ironic how liberals for twenty years insisted on the wisdom of public recognition of Mao Zedong's China and now object to serious quiet discussions with Deng Xiaoping's government. The government of a billion people may be oppressive, may lack democratic legitimacy, but it cannot be ignored.

It is also ironic how those liberals who've pressed so assiduously for arms control in U.S.-Soviet relations; for consultation in U.S.-Vietnamese relations; and for understanding in U.S.-relations with the full diversity of nations in Latin America, appear in this instance to prefer a posture of rhetorical belligerency toward a formidable nuclear power rather than firm, principled dialogue.

In this context, several observations are in order:

First, given the concern of Congress for security of the state of Israel, it should be noted that the day after General Scowcroft left Beijing, after having raised extremely important nonproliferation issues with China's senior leadership, the Chinese Foreign Ministry publicly declared that it would not sell medium range M-9 missiles to Syria.

Second, given the concern of Congress for America's negative balance of trade, the obvious demands underlining: no responsible American leader can believe that our national economic interests are served by waging psychological siege warfare with a stubborn and senescent Chinese leadership.

Third, given the concern of Congress for Asian regional issues, particularly Korea and Cambodia, no responsible solution is likely without a constructive Washington-Beijing dialogue.

Mr. Chairman, these are all compelling concerns and reasons for high-level U.S. consultations with China, consultations which I am convinced were led on the American side by ethical professionals who reflected firm American concerns and solid American values.

If China significantly moderates over the course of the next year, the President will be vindicated; if not, the Administration runs the risk of being perceived as helping to legitimize a less than legitimate regime in Beijing.

Whatever judgment history will render, a new President has within the scope of a single year firmly ensconced himself as the central player in leading the West toward a new security dialogue with the Soviet Union, a new strategic dialogue with China, and a new economic dialogue with the developing world. Judgments may be in question, but leadership is not.